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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Annexation of Texas. By Justin H. Smith. (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co. 1911. Pp. ix, 496.)¹

Exceptional opportunities and laborious industry have enabled Dr. Smith to give us a solid and comprehensive history of the annexation of Texas, based on a minute study of practically all the sources. Every phase of the subject is painstakingly, and, in most cases, it seems, conclusively covered. As gathered by the present reviewer, his most important conclusions, which agree in the main with recent investigations based on narrower sources, may be stated as follows: (1) The Texas revolution was "a legitimate measure of self-defense" against the despotism of Santa Anna. (2) The rebels were aided by people of the United States, and there were "no doubt substantial violations of the neutrality law," but these "cannot be shown to have been the fault of our national authorities." (3) "Very good reasons existed" for the recognition of Texas in March, 1837, and Jackson did well to follow the implied advice of Congress to recognize it. (4) Sectional influences caused the rejection of the Texan overtures for annexation in 1837, but by 1844 annexation sentiment was "largely non-partisan." (5) British interest in Texas was very great, and though Aberdeen's government seems not to have entertained the idea of annexing Texas, in 1844 it calmly contemplated war, if necessary, to prevent its annexation by the United States. (6) Tyler's desire to effect annexation, therefore, though partly due to personal and political ambition, was backed by patriotism and sound statesmanship; and "the method adopted to avert the peril was the most available and very likely the only effectual one that could have been devised." (7) Actually Texas was independent at the time, and the annexation treaty violated no principle of international law. (8) "Real opposition to the acceptance of Texas makes but a very small showing" in the rejection of the treaty, domestic politics being mainly

¹This review is reprinted from *The American Historical Review* for April, 1912.

responsible for its failure. (9) There was "no clear-cut issue between annexation and anti-annexation" in the election of 1844, and Polk's victory was not an endorsement of "immediate annexation"; nevertheless, "a large majority of the people" were "in favor of accepting Texas at an early date." (10) Fear of injuring Clay's chances, and thereby furthering annexation, deterred England and France from a joint protest against annexation in 1844, but the subsequent withdrawal of France compelled England to work indirectly by inducing Mexico to recognize Texas on condition that it should remain independent. (11) Houston, Jones, and other prominent Texans favored the British plan, but the people were wildly in favor of annexation.

The book naturally contains some errors of fact, but they do not of themselves materially affect its value. Unfortunately, however, another fault may weaken the confidence of some readers in its worth. This is an occasional lack of perspective which is sometimes merely amusing, but which at other times leads to inconsistency and at still others to questionable conclusions. As an example of the first, take the statement (p. 39) that the Texan Mier expedition—in which the total loss was 261 men—"considerably impaired . . . the fighting strength of the nation." And, remembering all of the facts, what must be thought of the argument (p. 386) that the practical Louis Philippe was influenced in his attitude toward annexation by the hope of eventually inheriting Spanish-America (including Texas) through the failure of the Spanish Bourbon line? As an example of inconsistency, on page 209 Calhoun represses disunion talk, but at the same time on page 211 he stimulates it. On page 392, England "could not afford to fight" the United States, but on page 394 it stood ready "to undertake a war in order to establish at the Sabine a perpetual barrier against us." As an example of the third, it seems to the reviewer that, in order to heighten the danger of British influence, too much is made of the apparent changes of public opinion in Texas during 1837-1845 (pp. 69, 70, 74, and Chapters 17 and 20). And one feels that the influence of slavery is slighted before and exaggerated after April, 1844, in order to emphasize a "change of front" in the administration and to explain the Calhoun-Pakenham incident.

The system of citation used, though trying and sometimes un-

certain, is probably defensible; but, whenever it is possible, copies should be distinguished from manuscript originals. For example, it should be stated that a note containing the word "improperly," to which the author attaches a good deal of importance, is a copy. It seems less justifiable to cite articles from which considerable assistance was drawn without giving the names of the writers. And unexplained references to "a well known historian," "the author of this passage," etc., are at the present day inexcusable. However, these are faults of taste. The book as a whole stands for itself, and on most points it probably says the final word. It is fittingly dedicated to the memory of Professor Garrison.

EUGENE C. BARKER.

Hunter's Magazine, published at Ozona, is amply fulfilling its promise to chronicle "frontier history, border tragedy, pioneer achievement" in Texas. The first volume was completed with the October issue. Plans for improving and enlarging the magazine are announced.

The following articles have recently appeared in *The Texas Magazine* (Houston): *Historic Briscoe County*, by Adele B. Loosean (December); *Mirabeau B. Lamar*, by Julia Beazley (December); *George W. Smyth*, by Mrs. Lipscomb Norvell (February); *Alexander Horton*, by Katie Daffan (March); *Reminiscences of a Castro Colonist*, by H. D. Fretelliere (March).